10: d'Orleans--356 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 114, 211, 622

"So far as the ethnography, the flora and the fauna of Laos are concerned, no better authority is to be had than the French naturalist, Henri Monhot, whose scientific missions were paid for with English money and who succumbed to an attack of fever at Luang Prabang on the 10th of November, 1861. A small monument erected to his memory by the Garnier Mission was restored by M. Pavie, and it is a whitewashed cenotaph upon which may be read in blue letters the inscription

H. MONHOT,
1890.

The site of this is a space which has been cleared in the woods which skirt the Nam Kane about an hour's march above Luang Prabang, Monhot having died in a village beyond this. The chief of a Leu village receives six piastres to keep the monument in order and collect insects, besides being the ballet-master and master of ceremonies in his native place."

23: Franck--334 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 211, 609, 771 Ethnic subgroup

"In contrast to China, the only visible evidences of religious belief in these wilder parts of Luang Prabang kingdom are bamboo arrows and bits of woven wicker squares and the like, beside the trail here and there. These, the prince told me, were warnings, either that a trap of arrows had been set for wild animals somewhere on the path leading off into the brousse, or that a Kha village was engaged in formalities to which strangers were not invited. Docile as they are, the Kha have been known to kill even Frenchmen who have overlooked or persisted in disobeying these warnings. Hence little is known of the religion of this primitive tribe, except that it acknowledges innumerable genii, good and bad, and that there are many things the visitor must not do, many things taboo not only for the Kha themselves but for any one who enters their villages, because to do them would be to stir up the evil spirits to wreak vengeance on the villagers themselves."

177 Notice should also be taken of the transformation which has been
563 going on for half a century or so, in the fusion of Khas with Lus,
144 Laos and Thais. From these fusions have emerged the mixed-blood races which are known as Phou-Thèngs, Phou-Thilongs, Soué Phongs, Phou-Oks, Laos-Nios, etc. [137] [Illustration] [138] [Blank page]

[139] Later on in 1898 and 1899 the 1894 experiment was tried once more, thanks to the intelligent initiative taken by the Superior Commandant in Upper Laos. His Majesty the king of Luang-Prabang proclaimed the emancipation of the Khas in his kingdom on both banks of the Mékong and even of those who, while natives of Luang-Prabang, are employed in Siam in the lumber camps of the upper Ménam valley.

In résumé, the Khas of French Laos are anything but a negligible quantity, but rather constitute a force and a reserve of energy from which we may draw great profit.

3. LANGUAGES

197 It is impossible here to examine in detail the many Kha idioms
194 and dialects, which only a long and attentive special study could succeed in coordinating, in grouping by similarities and in identifying with other languages, idioms and dialects which contributed to their formation.

The Kha dialects have harsh consonant sounds, among which the R and K are particularly noticeable, in contrast to what is the case in the other forms of the Thai language spoken in Laos where R, except in Siamese, is replaced by L or H.

Insofar as it is possible to judge, the primitive languages must have been corrupted when the land was invaded by foreigners. From that time on they dissolved, changed and became subdivided into idioms, and then into varied dialects. Besides the regional and racial
•211 idioms and the various local dialects the Khas, who do not (except for the Khouènes) have any form of writing, use various means to translate their thoughts, and symbolic objects such as strips of wood in which they make notches in accordance with a conventional system.

This method may be compared to that of a great many illiterate persons, who sometimes succeed in keeping quite complicated accounts by this means.

If one were to entrust a letter to a Kha courier, for example, one [140] would give him the following symbolic objects grouped together:

Kha

two strips of rattan, two feathers from the wing of a chicken or any other bird, two dry red peppers and two pieces of partly burned charcoal. The significance of these objects would be as follows: if the bearer of the letter does not make haste to deliver his message he will be whipped, whence the rattan; the feathers remind him that he must have the speed of a bird, together with the ardent fire of spices (the red pepper); and finally the charcoal means that he must even keep going at night by lighting torches or making a fire.

The Khmou Kha idiom, among others, is quite widespread, especially in the territory to the northwest of Luang-Prabang where it is in current use for relations between groups which do not speak the same dialect. These idioms are highly rudimentary, moreover, and do not lend themselves to the expression of ideas which are at all subtle or abstract.

Some of them are even composed of only two or three hundred words, invariable in form, the use of which naturally does not involve any grammatical rule.

The Thai language is the fundamental tongue of Laos. It is spoken and written in five variotonic and graphic forms which vary from one another by slight differences in detail, that is to say by differences which bear much more on graphic and phonetic representation than on syntax.

Classified by order of highest development from the point of view of their ability to translate thought, these forms of the Thai language are Siamese, Laotian, Youn, Lu and Phouthai.

In order to give some idea of the gradation which there is between these different forms in the way of alphabetic wealth, variety of accentuation and flexibility of phonetic nuances, we might say that Phouthai is to Siamese what Montaigne's French is to the present-day language.

Siamese is Thai which has been perfected, stabilized phonetically, enriched and complicated alphabetically to such a point as to enable it to translate European languages almost literally.

But although Siamese is easy to read correctly, writing it is extremely complicated by reason of its highly varied tones and the profusion of its accentuation.

[141] The Phouthai language. Phouthai, on the other hand, and we refer here to the written language rather than the present-day spoken language, is rather a primitive form of Thai from the graphic point of view.